

That pesticide 'dressing' for your salad is to die for!

PANAP study finds unauthorised use of toxic chemicals is rampant in India

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More than half of the 53 pesticides commonly used in Indian agriculture are highly hazardous, and two-thirds of those involved in manual spraying do not wear any protective equipment, which exposes them to toxic chemicals, a report released on Wednesday said.

The report, brought out by the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PANAP), looked at pesticide usage patterns in seven South and South-East Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia.

The findings on India were based on six studies carried

out since 2015 and involved personal interviews with around 650 pesticide-using farmers and farm-workers from 11 States. It found major lacunae in every aspects of pesticide handling, including retailing, packaging, handling storage and disposal.

"Seven out of 10 respondents interviewed said they have suffered ill-effects due to pesticide exposure," said PANAP Executive Director Sarojeni Rengam, one of the authors of the report. Commonly reported health issues include respiratory, skin, EENT, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and neurolo-

gical problems. The report found that agrochemical transnational corporations and their subsidiaries as well as local pesticide manufacturers and distributors produce and distrib-

ute highly hazardous pesticides that cause acute and chronic health effects. The pesticides are also known to cause environmental damage.

Another alarming revelation from the report was the unapproved use of pesticides on crops. For example, paraquat, a highly hazardous pesticide, was approved for use by the Central Insecticide Board and Registration Committee for use

only on 12 crops, including cotton, rice, wheat and rubber, but is used on 25 crops. Another pesticide, fipronil, is approved for seven crops, but farmers use it on 27 crops.

Rising pesticide usage

India, with an estimated market size of \$4.9 billion in 2017, is the fourth-largest producer of pesticides after the US, Japan and China. India's pesticide usage has jumped from 47,020 tonnes in 2002 to 60,280 tonnes in 2014. Paddy accounts for the largest share of pesticide use (26-28 per cent), followed by cotton (18-20 per cent).

The domestic consumption of pesticides is expected to grow at 6.5 per cent from 2015 to 2020. "The failure to regulate pesticide use - including the growth in imports and use of unregistered pesticides - is causing environmental health issues in rural areas."

